

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS

BISHOP ISHMAEL SAM,) Case No.
)
Plaintiff,)
v.)
JERRY TACHIE-MENSON,) **COMPLAINT**
)
Defendant.)

NOW COMES Plaintiff BISHOP ISHMAEL SAM (“Bishop Sam”), by and through undersigned counsel, and for his Complaint against Defendant JERRY TACHIE-MENSON states as follows:

PARTIES

1. Plaintiff Bishop Ishmael Sam currently resides in Tema, Ghana in West Africa.
2. Bishop Sam is a bishop for Lighthouse Chapel International (“Lighthouse”) which is a Pentecostal Christian Church founded in Ghana in 1987.
3. Defendant Jerry Tachie-Menson is a resident of the state of Texas and was formerly an employee of Lighthouse.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

4. This Court possesses federal diversity under 28 U.S.C. § 1332 as the parties are diverse in citizenship and the amount in controversy exceeds \$75,000.
5. Venue is proper in the District Court for the Southern District of Texas pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331(b)(1).

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

6. Since the beginning of 2020, and continuing to the present date, Defendant has engaged in and perpetuated an ongoing smear campaign against Lighthouse and individual Lighthouse leaders and pastors via his public Facebook page asserting false, baseless, defamatory, and disparaging statements against them.

- a. Defendant's Facebook Profile
(<https://www.facebook.com/jerry.tachiemenson>)
7. Between August 3, 2021 and August 5, 2021, Defendant made the following false and defamatory statements directed at Plaintiff:
 - a. "Don't court public sympathy by deliberately appearing to be humble in your approach, because beneath that sheepskin is a vicious wolf! I know how you operate. NEVER FORGET THAT! Maybe you should tell the whole world how you colluded to demote, degrade and oust one of the longest serving loyal sons of your boss after 28 years of faithful service. This happened just 2 months ago! His name starts with 'Jo'." See Exhibit 1.
 - b. "YOU Mr. Sam, are the reason why one of my dear friends attempted suicide thrice because you LIED against him." See Exhibit 1
 - c. "When Yalleh announced to the Comm. 22 pastors that Johnny had resigned, HAD HE RESIGNED OR NOT?.... I know the truth, I just want you to lie publicly." See Exhibit 2
 - d. "Shall we talk about Baffoe-Bonnie and how you lied on him too? Do you know he attempted suicide thrice?" See Exhibit 3
8. All of Defendant's statements are of and concerning Plaintiff, as they either 'tag' Plaintiff's personal Facebook profile or are in reply to statements made by Plaintiff.
9. In August 2021, Nana Yaw Baffoe-Bonnie, one of the former members of Lighthouse referenced by Defendant in his defamatory posts, made the following public retraction of the same statements in a thread on Facebook:
 - a. "I hereby retract the above comments and apologize unreservedly to Bishop Ishmael Sam for any harm the said comments may have caused him.
See Exhibit 4
10. On or about September 15, 2021, Plaintiff issued a retraction demand to Defendant identifying the false and defamatory statements made by Defendant of and concerning Bishop Sam pursuant to The Defamation Mitigation Act (DMA), Tex. Civ. Prac. & Rem. Code §§ 73.051–.062.
11. Despite public retractions from others and Bishop Sam's request for same from Defendant, Defendant continues to maintain to this day the purported veracity of his claims.

COUNT ONE
(Defamation – Libel Per Se)

12. Plaintiff incorporates and realleges every allegation set forth above as though fully set forth herein.
13. Defendant has intentionally published false and defamatory statements of and concerning Plaintiff Bishop Sam to third parties via Defendant's public Facebook profile.
14. Defendant published the false and defamatory statements with actual malice against Plaintiff.
15. Specifically, Defendant claimed that Bishop Sam caused a former Lighthouse member, Nana Yaw Baffoe-Bonnie, to attempt suicide three times. See Exhibits 1 and 3.
16. Defendant's statements regarding Bishop Sam are false in that Bishop Sam did not cause, coerce, or otherwise lead Nana Yaw Boffoe-Bonnie to attempt suicide three times.
17. The falsity of Defendant's statements is further evidenced by Nana Yaw Boffoe-Bonnie's public apology to Bishop Sam and public retraction of the claims he originally made that Defendant also independently made on multiple occasions. See Exhibit 4.
18. Defendant made these claims with knowledge of their falsity or with reckless disregard to the truth or falsity of the claims.
19. Specifically, Defendant made false and defamatory statements alleging that Bishop Sam colluded to demote, degrade and oust one of the longest serving bishops. See Exhibit 1.
20. These claims are defamatory in that they tend to injure, and do in fact injure, Bishop Sam's reputation and exposes Bishop Sam to public hatred, contempt, and ridicule.
21. These claims are defamatory in that they impeach Bishop Sam's honesty, integrity, virtue, and reputation in both his personal and professional community.
22. Defendant's false and defamatory statements of and concerning Bishop Sam has caused significant reputational damage and harm to Bishop Sam.
23. Based on the public comments and interactions on Defendant's posts, Defendant's false and defamatory statements were viewed and believed by current and prospective Lighthouse members, as well as non-members.

24. Defendant's false and defamatory statements of and concerning Bishop Sam has caused significant reputational damage and harm to Bishop Sam.
25. Bishop Sam has suffered emotional distress and mental anguish due to the numerous publications of false and defamatory statements by Defendant.
26. As a direct result of Defendant's conduct, Bishop Sam has suffered in excess of \$75,000 and in a specific amount to be proven at trial.

COUNT TWO
(Injunctive Relief)

27. Plaintiff incorporates and realleges every allegation set forth above as though fully set forth herein.
28. Defendant authored and published false and defamatory statements regarding Bishop Sam with the intent to harm Bishop Sam. The statements constitute libel *per se* as they are false and falsely attack Plaintiff's reputation as religious and spiritual leader to an international community of members of Lighthouse and to the public.
29. Defendant acted with malice in authoring and publishing statements regarding Bishop Sam because Defendant knew the statements were false or acted with reckless disregard as to their falsity.
30. As a direct and proximate result of the publication of the statements, Bishop Sam has suffered significant reputational and economic harm.
31. Bishop Sam has already suffered and will continue to suffer irreparable harm if Defendant is not enjoined to remove false and defamatory statements from the Internet and is not prohibited from continuing to publish similar false and defamatory statements regarding Bishop Sam.
32. There is no other adequate remedy at law because Defendant's defamatory conduct has no bounds and is of a continuing nature.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, based upon the foregoing, Plaintiff Bishop Ishmael Sam demands judgment in his favor and against Defendant on all counts as follows:

- a. Issuance by this Court of an Order decreeing that the statements regarding Bishop Sam are false and defamatory;

- b. Permanent Injunctive Relief that Defendant and his/her/its agents, assigns, independent contractors, attorneys, representatives, and those persons or entities in active concert or participation with them are:
 - i. Prohibited from creating or publishing statements regarding Bishop Sam;
 - ii. Ordered to take all action, including but not limited to removing the false and defamatory statements from the Internet;
- c. Actual and/or compensatory damages in an amount to be proven at trial;
- d. Pre- and post- litigation interest at the maximum rate provided by law;
- e. Costs of this action; and
- f. For all other relief as this Court may deem just and proper under the circumstances.

JURY DEMAND

Plaintiff Bishop Ishmael Sam demands a trial by jury on all issues so triable.

Date: October 12, 2021

Respectfully Submitted.

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